THEN & NOW!

By Frances H. Pamplin

All dressed up, and ready to go - Calvin H. Robinson at age 2 years.

Father Darkleaf, Calvin H. Robinson, spent four years with a Lynchburg radio station; his talk show which was aired every Friday evening was called "The Country Editor".

"Father Darkleaf, Editor-Publisher, THEN; Columnist NOW"

In the play 'Romeo and Juliet' by William Shakespeare, we find the words, "what's in a name - - -" and we wonder, exactly what does a name denote? Take the well-known name of Father Darkleaf; whenever we hear it, we immediately think of the widely-read column in the TIMES-VIRGINIAN. What about the man behind that name?

Take a unique style of writing, a storehouse of interesting stories and experiences from which to draw, a keen mind, and what does it produce? A newspaper column that holds the attention of the reader to the very last sentence.

Calvin H. Robinson, Father Darkleaf, was born in Norfolk, Va., the son of a Baptist minister. In the 60 years that Rev. Robinson was a minister, he moved many times and consequently Calvin lived all over Virginia.

Calvin began school in Holdcroft School in Charles City, but in just a few years his father was called to preach in Madison County. While at Holdcroft School, Calvin did quite well; he showed me a report card dated 1912 when he was in the first grade in the one room school and it read as follows: spelling 100, reading 98, writing 96, arithmetic 99. An outstanding student, wouldn't you agree?

It was in Madison County that Calvin told of his experiences riding a pony to school. It was a distance of four or five miles each way. Going to school presented no problems at all but the trip home was an entirely different story! It happened to be the extremely cold rough winter of 1917 (could it have been worse than '77) that Calvin was riding the pony. After the pony had patiently stood in the cold school yard all day, he seemed to sense that the trip home meant that very soon he'd be in a warm stable and have food. The happy thoughts were too much for the pony to bear - - - he began to go faster and faster; then it happened. Suddenly Calvin was on the ground. Taking a spill in raw, wintry weather was no fun, but not about to be discouraged by that pony, Calvin climbed back on and away they went. He just hoped it didn't happen again until the next day. It seemed that it was almost a daily occurance. Mr. Robinson told me he had never ridden a school bus in his life but he had ridden a bicycle to school on many occasion.

While living in Madison County, Calvin had a tutor. This tutor, Edward Valentine Lightfoot, was a most unforgetable character and lived in a house that was mansion-like in appearance. During recess, the students were permitted the luxury of listening to the victrola - - - the first one Calvin had the privilege of hearing. There was one particular song Calvin loved to hear, a polka, "The Jolly Coppersmith."

Father Darkleaf is no stranger to hard work. He recalled making enough money as a boy during World War I to buy a saving bond. His source of income - - - the rabbit strap! For each rabbit he caught in the trap, cleaned and took the local storekeeper, he received a credit of .18; when he had sufficient credit he received a savings bond in the amount of $25.00. It seems that the storekeeper was also the postmaster! A lot of rabbits went into that bond.

Calvin spent his first two years of high school in Culpeper and the final two in Wilson High School in Portsmouth where he received his diploma. While attending school in Culpeper, he worked for the Virginia Star Newspaper in the printing department. It is very possible that while he worked here, the desire to own his own paper began to grow in his mind.

While at Wilson High School, Calvin, like most high school boys, had a job. He worked every afternoon and on Saturdays (a total of 30 hours per week) for the David Pender Store Chain at the fantastic sum of .10 per hour. When he graduated, he was offered the position of managing one of the stores which was opening in N.C. but declined the offer to enter college.

While clerking at the Pender Store, Calvin remembers selling sugar from a sack; he weighed out 2# per customer; finally with rationing due to World War I, the store had a policy that a customer had to buy 2# of meal in order to get 2# of sugar. Calvin remembers selling Lipton Tea, Eagle Brand Milk, and Double Q Salmon; some things were the same THEN and NOW. The price of sardines was not - - - Calvin remembers selling them for 5c each.

Graduating from high school in 1922, Calvin entered The University of Richmond; working from 6 p.m. until 12 midnight verifying charge tickets at Miller and Rhoads, he pretty well worked his way through college. He noted when he attended the University of Richmond, it was 9 miles out of the city limits of Richmond.

Taking all of the English courses that he could manage, Calvin graduated from college in 1926. He is a great believer in the three "r's", reading 'riting, and 'rithmetic. He also believes that a person can't have too many courses in English.

Now more than anything, Calvin wanted a school letter but there was one drawback - - - he was too small to make any of the teams. Unusually determined, he got his letter anyway, as student manager of the baseball team; incidentally, he acquired another letter as head cheerleader.

Taking advantage of every phase of university life, Calvin wrote, directed, and was MC for a ministral show "The Spider Frolics". The production was given to make money for uniforms for the school band. In talking about the difference in university life those days and today, Mr. Robinson recalled walking across the bridge that separated the "boy's side" of the campus from the "girl's side" Westhampton College. They were permitted a 15-minute walk with the girls on the Westhampton side; on Saturday night you could have a date for an hour!

He remembered playing tennis at sunrise before breakfast - - - could it have been that Father Darkleaf was quite a ladies man?

While at college he wrote a column for the school paper called "Hash and Rehash". It seems his writing began early in his career. His first job after college was as assistant principal and teacher at Onancock High School in Accomac County. He taught six classes in five girls' basketball subjects and was the only coach for boys and girls physical education classes. The girls' basketball team won 52 straight games! While here, he began writing a column for the weekly newspaper the Eastern Shore News, his column was called "The Shoreline". He continued to write this column until he came to Appomattox.

It was in 1931 that Calvin H. Robinson really got down to business aobut owning his own paper. While on vacation he came to Farmville to see a gentlemen, Mr. James Latimer, who was the secretary of the Virginia Press Association. Mr. Latimer was working for Barrye Wall of the Farmville Herald. He was told that the Appomattox paper was for sale and he was interested.

The Appomattox paper was begun in 1892 as the Appomattox Buckingham Times; a few years later a rival paper was begun in Appomattox The Southside Virginian". In a few years the papers merged and became The Times Virginian.

In September of 1931, Calvin Robinson became the proud owner of a weekly newspaper. He purchased the paper from Mr. A. H. Clements and kept it until he sold it to W. Lloyd Vaughan in 1962.

A four page weekly newspaper with very little advertising except for legal notices and orders of publications, and a small circulation it began to grow under the capable hands of Calvin. When he took over the paper, he also had the services of a very capable crew; Mrs. Lougenia Doss who worked for the Times Virginian for over 40 years, Percy Staten a linotype operator and Spillar Trent. Once a week, Spillar got out his sack of flour and make a flour paste with which to seal the singles wrappers on the paper.

Shortly after taking over the paper Calvin met and married a pretty school teacher, Earle Patteson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Patterson of Appomattox. Her mother, the late Mrs. Ola Patteson was a well-known and well-loved businesswoman in Appomattox for many years. Earl and Calvin met at a Foxhunters Dance at the old Appomattox Hotel.

One of the best things that happened to Calvin was marrying Earle. After their marriage she began helping him in the newspaper. She did the bookwork, wrote for the paper and was so familiar with the people of the county that she knew most of the subscribers by name.

Another helper that Calvin had was Beck Hudson, the present News Editor of the Times-Virginian. According to Calvin, Beck was not afraid of work. Being just a young child the time she didn't mind getting ink all over her and loved helping her uncle in any way that he would permit. She later became a self-taught linotype operator.

During his early years Calvin worked very hard and he and his wife went for 19 years without a day off from work. When they did take a vacation, they went to California for six weeks.

Calvin spent four years as a radio commentator in a radio station in Lynchburg; he was on the air every Friday evening with a spot called "The Country Editor", talking about everything and anything that came to mind. He won a first award for excellence in news commentary and went to Washington to accept the award.

Calvin learned early that the backbone of a country newspaper is the country correspondence and sought the help of Miss Cassie Baldwin of the Rocks community to report the Rocks news; Miss Cassie still writes the Rocks column for us. Another capable correspondent of the Times-Virginian is Rev. R. Q. Lawing; he also was recruited by Mr. Robinson and is still writing for us.

Since Dark Fired Tobacco was the big cash for the farmers in the Appomattox area, Calvin gave himself the name Father Darkleaf and to his wife, Earl, he gave the name Mother Brightleaf. His column, Father Darkleaf appears weekly in the Times-Virginian.

In their early days at the paper, Calvin and Earl bought a beautiful white Eskino-Spitz pully. When they first acquired him, he barked so much that they couldn't get any sleep. One night after trying vainly to get the puppy quiet, Calvin gave up and took the little dog down to the Times-Virginian office and put him inside. Home he went, to get the first good nights sleep he had had in quite a few nights. The puppy, adventure-some little thing that he was, decided he had better things to do than sleep; instead he explored the office. When they went down to the office the next morning they were greeted by nothing less than a black puppy ! He had gotten into the ink fountain on the newspaper press and was covered in black ink. They cleaned and cleaned and finally he was white again.

A member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, a social fraternity, Omicron Delta Kappa, an organization of all around leaders, TAU Kappa Alpha, public speaking, and Pi Delta Epsilon, journalism, Calvin is indeed a many of many talents and interests. To me, however, his greatest attribute is his love of people and his community. I asked him about the differences in Appomattox when he first came and the days of NOW and he said, "that's a good question, but other than the physical differences, I would have to say that the standard of living made possible by the industrial payrolls is the greatest difference.

A civic minded, he was instrumental in getting the Lions Club organized in Appomattox; J. C. Caldwell was the first president and Calvin was the first secretary. He also served for three terms on the town council and was president in the late 30's.

Father Darkleaf used the expression many times, "Appomattox is a growing town". He is proud that it is a growing town, but I wonder does he have any idea just how much he was instrumental in the growth of this town? It was indeed a lucky day for Appomattox and it's citizens when Calvin Robinson bought the local paper. Calvin and Earl, the people of Appomattox love you!

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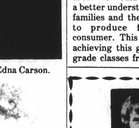

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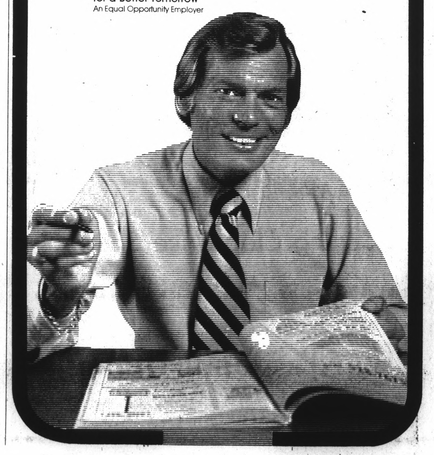

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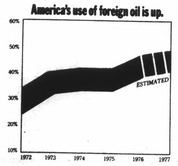
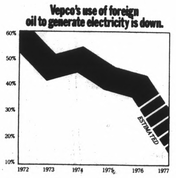


Vepco's use of foreign oil to generate electricity is down.



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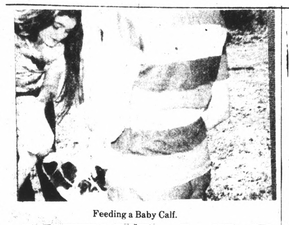
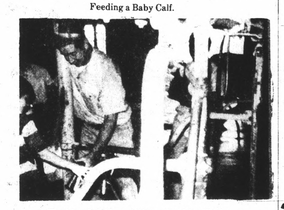


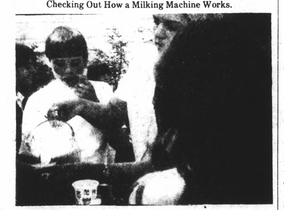
Feeding a Baby Calf.

On A Flat Bed Wagon Hooked Behind the Tractor Driven by W. E. Bondurant to See Beef Cattle "Up Close."



Checking Out How a Milking Machine Works.

Mr. W. E. Bondurant Explaining How The Big "Round" Baler Works.



Being Served "Raw" Milk and Cookies by Mrs. Edna Carson.

Mr. Dan Carson Showing Corn Planter and Explaining Rotation of Crops, Etc.

In The Creek on the Farm of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Krantz on "Lunch Break."

FARM BUREAU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ARRANGED DAIRY AND BEEF CATTLE TOUR

The Appomattox County Farm Bureau Women's Committee recently arranged a dairy and beef cattle farm tour for children in the Lynchburg area. We would like to promote a better understanding for farm families and the work they do to produce food for the consumer. This is one way of achieving this goal. Two sixth grade classes from Timberlake Christian School in Forest, Va. were invited to participate. Mr. and Mrs. Dan Carson of Carson Farms, Inc. explained how the feed was raised for their dairy cows and how much it took to produce milk. Mr. Carson showed some of the machinery involved in his work and how proper stewardship of the land was Biblical as well as "common sense." After the tour Mrs. Edna Carson served "raw" milk and cookies. The children really enjoyed their refreshments.

The next stop was at the Richard Krantz farm for lunch on the creek. The creek and the horse were a real hit with the kids.

The next place toured was a farm rented by Mr. W. E. Bondurant for his beef cattle operation. Mr. Bondurant explained the methods he uses for feeding and caring for the livestock. He also showed a big round baler and some of the bales of hay. The children from Timberlake had already studied about proper plowing, etc. to prevent erosion and to get better use of the land God has provided.

Many thanks from the Women's Committee to Mr. and Mrs. Dan Carson, W. T. Lambert, (the right hand man) and to Mr. W. E. Bondurant for taking time to show the children around.

Stonewall

And I am come down to delive them out of the hand of the Egyptains. Exodus 3:8.

Mr. and Mrs. I. B. Wheeler were supper guests of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Ray Burnett Saturday night. Also Mr. Joe Burnett of Lynchburg. They took Joe home and visited Mr. and Mrs. Kemp Nixon and family.

Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Lanksley of Lynchburg, Mr.and Mrs. Cecil Bryant of Lynchburg, Mr. and Mrs. Merwy Ewers and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Layne of Rustburg visited Mrs. John Ewers and Mr. and Mrs. Wislon Garret Sunday. Also Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Ewers.

Mrs. Ruth Roach from Ayopa, Mrs. Connie Garrett visited Mr. and Mrs. I. B. Wheeler Monday morning.

Last week Mr. Lawrence Wheeler was dinner guest of Mr. and Mrs. I. B. Wheeler, Thursday Mr. Harold and Dennis Jones had dinenr with them. Sunday evening Mr. and Mrs. Ben Wheeler visited them.

Quite a large number has visited Mr. and Mrs. Phil Harrison since brining their baby Don home.

All the sick are on the mend I am glad to report.

Mrs. Wilson Garrett took Mrs. Arnold Ewers to the dr. in town Monday.

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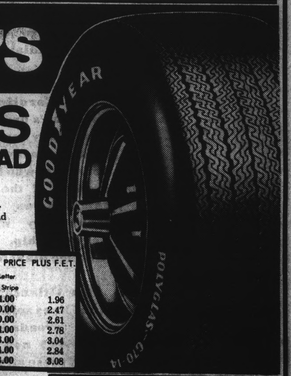

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G70 x 14	$58.55	$56.00	$44.00	2.78
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